

What is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent of the  
United States is:

- 5     1.     An cutting apparatus for removing a portion of a protective tape from a wafer,  
comprising:

a support for holding a wafer having a protective tape thereon;

a cutting element placed at a first predetermined distance from said support for  
moving relative to said support to cut protective tape from a wafer placed on the support;

- 10     a sensor for detecting if protective tape on a wafer is properly removed by said  
cutting element; and

a circuit for initiating corrective action when the sensor detects that a protective tape  
is not properly removed from a wafer by said cutting element.

- 15     2.     The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action stops  
operation of said cutting apparatus.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action prevents  
a wafer on said support from being moved to a grinding area.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action prevents

5 a backgrinding apparatus from grinding the wafer.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is an mechanical sensor.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is an optical sensor.

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7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first predetermined distance is approximately  
0.5 mm from the edge of a wafer placed on said support.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is placed behind the cutting element in

15 a direction of cutting action of said cutting element.

9. A method for removing a portion of a protective tape from a semiconductor wafer comprising:

cutting the protective tape at a predetermined distance from the perimeter of the wafer;

5 sensing whether said cutting has properly removed the protective tape; and  
taking a corrective action if said protective tape has not been properly removed.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing further comprises sensing whether said protective tape exists at said predetermined distance from the perimeter of the wafer.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the corrective action is halting further cutting operation.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the corrective action is preventing the wafer from being subsequently backgrinded.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing is a mechanical sensing.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing is an optical sensing.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein said predetermined short distance is approximately

5 0.5 mm.